news

FOR PARTNERS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

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Disaster Forum 2007

Continuing the knowledge curve

Hundreds of emergency management professionals from across the continent attended Disaster Forum 2007 in Banff from April 30 – May 3. Attendees were offered a range of informative sessions, including crisis communications, emotional care and support for emergency responders, exercise design and best practices in managing an emergency operations centre. Also in attendance was Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Ray Danyluk, who spoke to the crowd about the Alberta perspective on emergency preparedness and management.

Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Ray Danyluk, centre, with some of the Emergency Management Alberta staff involved with Disaster Forum 2007.

News from AEMA

Agency receives GITA's Innovator Award

Emergency Management Alberta, now part of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), has been named the recipient of the 2007 GITA Innovator Award by the Geospatial Information & Technology Association (GITA). The award, which recognizes the unique and significant contributions of organizations that have used geospatial technology in the innovative development of a technology, service or application, was presented during GITA's Annual Conference March 4-7, 2007 in San Antonio, Texas.

James Berge proudly displays the GITA award he accepted on behalf of EMA.

The award stems from an initiative that began three years ago. In 2004, Emergency Management Alberta initiated a project, with financial support from the Alberta

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Alberta

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Alberta

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Innovation Program, to establish a secure, web-based, integrated incident logging and mapping tool, used to share information between agencies and jurisdictions in both private and public sectors. The project will enable decision-makers at all levels to become situationally aware of an incident and make better decisions. Once complete, Alberta will be uniquely equipped with an application system that will significantly enhance emergency management across the province in a coordinated, effective and efficient manner to minimize risk to Alberta citizens, businesses, environment and infrastructure.

James Berge, Systems Analyst – EMOS Project, EMA accepted the award on behalf of the agency and said, "The Government of Alberta and Emergency Management Alberta are honoured to receive this award. We would like to thank GITA for recognizing the work we have done and our vision to expand and utilize geospatial technology."

The project will enable decision-makers at all levels to become situationally aware of an incident and make better decisions.

About GITA

The mission of the Geospatial Information & Technology Association (GITA) is to provide excellence in education, information exchange and applied research on the use and benefits of geospatial information and technology in business, utility and government applications worldwide. Visit GITA on the Web at www.gita.org.

Highlights

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The 60th annual Alberta Fire Chiefs Association conference was a big success

2008-03245,

Resourcing educational opportunities

THIS ISSUE'S THEME OF EDUCATION AND PREVENTION is very apropos for the Fire Commissioner's Office and for Alberta's emergency responders. Educational opportunities abound in our province. In addition to the many tools available to all Albertans to increase their knowledge and understanding of important issues, such as the newspaper, television, radio, libraries or the Internet, those working in fire and emergency response are also able to access considerably more resources of particular relevance to their profession.

Take, for example, **fire etc.**, which is now amalgamated with Lakeland College. We are very fortunate to have a world-class fire training school that provides a variety of hands-on training courses in our province. Training opportunities are also available in other parts of the province, such as the Brooks Training Facility and the City of Edmonton's training tower. These resources provide responders with choices to obtain training close to their own communities or through the provincial school. As well, through the municipal grants program provided by Alberta Municipal Affairs and Housing, fire departments and jurisdictions are encouraged to apply for government funding to hold training sessions in communities around the province.

The FCO is committed to continuing efforts to increase awareness about education and training for firefighters and other emergency responders through various sources. Through our new agency, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, numerous training programs are offered, including no-cost courses conducted by Emergency Management Alberta Training Officers to enhance emergency preparedness and knowledge and training.

Rick McCullough, Alberta Fire Commissioner

Considerable information is also posted on our department website, in particular the FCO website. Whether you're looking for tip sheets or looking to borrow a mascot or the Hazard House, the information is there.

We also continue to include educational information in our quarterly publication, *Alberta FIREnews*. Looking through back issues, I noticed that almost every issue has at least one article related to education, such as the on-line courses offered through Edmonton Fire Services and **fire etc.** More recently, we've added a feature at the bottom of some of the articles to indicate resource materials that are available through government libraries for those who want to expand their knowledge on a particular issue.

...almost every issue has at least one article related to education, such as the on-line courses offered through Edmonton Fire Services and fire etc.

As your Fire Commissioner, I can assure that we will continue to highlight programs and opportunities that provide education for our readers. I also encourage you to get involved with your publication by requesting information that you are interested in. That way, we keep the learning process open and interesting.

Moving forward with AEMA

The Alberta government's strategic decision to create the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is exactly what made the position of Managing Director so attractive says Dave Hodgins, who was appointed to the position in May 2007.

"I had been watching what is happening at the provincial level related to emergency management and fire services in B.C. and beyond, and am very impressed with Alberta's approach in creating the Agency. The establishment of the Agency truly recognizes the importance of emergency preparedness, response and recovery, which is so very necessary in today's complex and changing world. Combining the Fire Commissioner's Office and Emergency Management Alberta to create the Agency and having it report to the Minister directly substantially increases the profile of the Agency and, in so doing, also signals the importance of emergency management and fire services."

The Managing Director has already been hard at work in terms of extensive discussions with Agency executive and staff as well as other government departments and organizations. "Now that the legislation to formally create the Agency has passed, there are a number of significant projects and programs to be addressed. Our first step was to set out a 100-day plan of short-term strategic goals, but we are also looking ahead to medium and long term goals," added Hodgins.

As Hodgins sees it, the Agency is already off to a great start. "We have talented people with solid experience, who are dedicated and competent. It is these individuals who will create the future and the success of the Agency," stated Hodgins. "My role is to provide clear direction and strategic leadership in terms of the Government of Alberta's expectations."

Change will occur and Hodgins points out that the Agency will be effective and efficient. "We are seeking opportunities to provide enhanced service delivery within the Agency's mandate. Ultimately, we need to be ready to react and respond in the interest of assisting the Government of Alberta, local communities and industry. That doesn't necessarily mean responding with lights and sirens. Rather, we need to ensure we are proactive in the key areas of education, prevention and mitigation."

Hodgins also points out that he is looking for ways to create synergies while building on existing solid partnerships and linkages. He's been busy talking to deputy ministers of various Alberta government ministries about business continuity planning initiatives and opportunities for resource sharing. As well, he has been meeting with industry and local government representatives asking for their support and looking to improve communications and coordination. "By being better coordinated and connected, we are able to provide superior service, and that's really the key to the Agency's long-term success," advised Hodgins.

Exceptional experience and education

Dave Hodgins' extensive background in emergency management and fire services includes serving as an Assistant Deputy Minister and B.C. Fire Commissioner prior to his appointment as Managing Director of AEMA in May 2007. His distinguished career began as a volunteer firefighter in 1977; he went on to become the Fire Chief in Strathcona County, Alberta and London, Ontario. He has also served as the President of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association for five years.

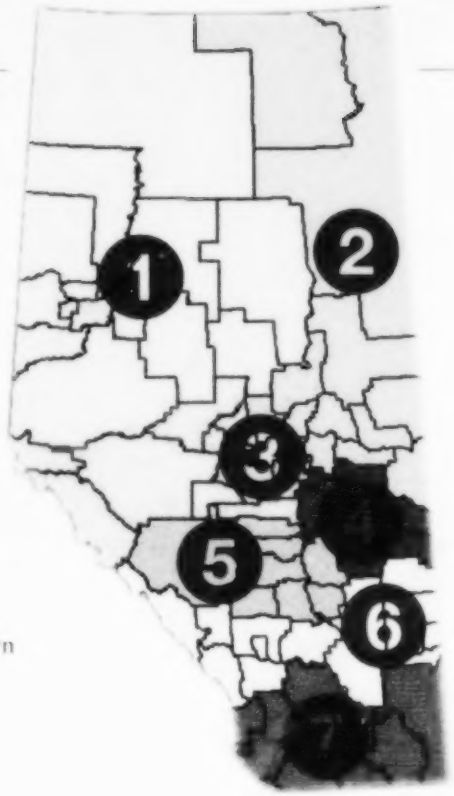
In addition to international recognition for his emergency service strategic leadership skills, Hodgins is an accomplished author and speaker. He is a graduate of the University of Alberta Public Administration Program and is a Certified Emergency Manager (CEM).

He has also received numerous accolades, including several medals as well as the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Program Award of Excellence, an Exemplary Service Medal, Firefighter of the Year, Citizen of the Year and the Award for Bravery.

AEMA Managing Director Dave Hodgins enjoying one of his favourite hobbies.

FCO regional update

Changing with the times



As a reader of *Alberta FIREnews*, you know that there have been a number of changes within the FCO in recent months, from a new Fire Commissioner to the FCO and the FCO and EMA being united under the umbrella of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

With all these changes, it only made sense to review the regional aspect of the FCO. One of the key changes was redefining the regional map to align with the regions of Emergency Management Alberta. This results in seven regions, as indicated in the map.

Another change was reassigning fire safety officers in part to align with the new regions but also to account for recent staff changes. Ross Bennett is re-assigned to the Northeast Region and Kevan Jess is re-assigned to the North Central Region. Both Ross and Kevan will work out of Edmonton. Tom O'Gorman continues in the Central Region and Frank Harris continues in the East Central Region. Trent West has been hired for the South Central Region and Mike Shykora will be joining the FCO on September 1st as the Fire Safety Officer for the Northwest (Peace River-Grande Prairie) Region. The FCO hopes to have the the Southern Region position filled soon.

Fishing Lake grateful recipient

Sharing of resources well received

ALBERTA'S FIRE DEPARTMENTS ARE A GENEROUS GROUP OF PEOPLE, from getting involved in community endeavours to sharing resources and people power. One such example of this generosity of spirit was when the Town of Swan Hills Fire Department purchased new equipment, including a compressor. Knowing that another fire department could likely benefit from their old but well-maintained equipment, Swan Hills Fire Chief Trent Wagner contacted Ernie Polsom at the Fire Commissioner's Office to find a worthy recipient. "There are so many small fire departments in Alberta and many of them have very tight budgets. I had the option of selling the equipment or sending it overseas or to Mexico but I thought if one of the departments in our own province could use it that would be better. In giving the equipment away, I stipulated that if they couldn't use some of the equipment, they could give it to someone else, but I didn't want anyone to sell it and make money from it," said Wagner. The end result was Fishing Lake becoming the proud owners of a compressor system and enough breathing apparatus to outfit 25 firefighters.

We are truly grateful to our colleagues in Swan Hills and want to extend our sincere appreciation to them.

"This was a wonderful gift," said Leon Cardinal, Fire Chief for the Fishing Lake Metis Settlement. "The ability to fill our own cylinders enables us to be a lot more effective, both in training and in responding to calls. We are truly grateful to our colleagues in Swan Hills and want to extend our sincere appreciation to them."

Fishing Lake is located one hour north of Lloydminster, one hour south of Cold Lake and about 30 minutes east of Elk Point. Cardinal has been with the fire department for 15 years, and is currently in his 10th year as the fire chief. The department has 15 volunteers, which includes a mix of both male and female firefighters.

Sharing is encouraged

The Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO) has a number of resources available to assist fire departments and emergency responders in educating their community residents about fire prevention and fire education.

Hazard Houses

In addition to DVDs and library materials, the FCO also has five Hazard Houses that were purchased from Modeltech International. "The Hazard House is a unique teaching aid to provide innovative and captivating presentations on home fire hazards, early detection of smoke/fire and proper fire emergency responses," said Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner. "It is recommended for use with the *Risk Watch* and Learn Not To Burn programs of NFPA and has been described as one of the best tools for teaching, learning and remembering about hazards and risks inside and outside the home."

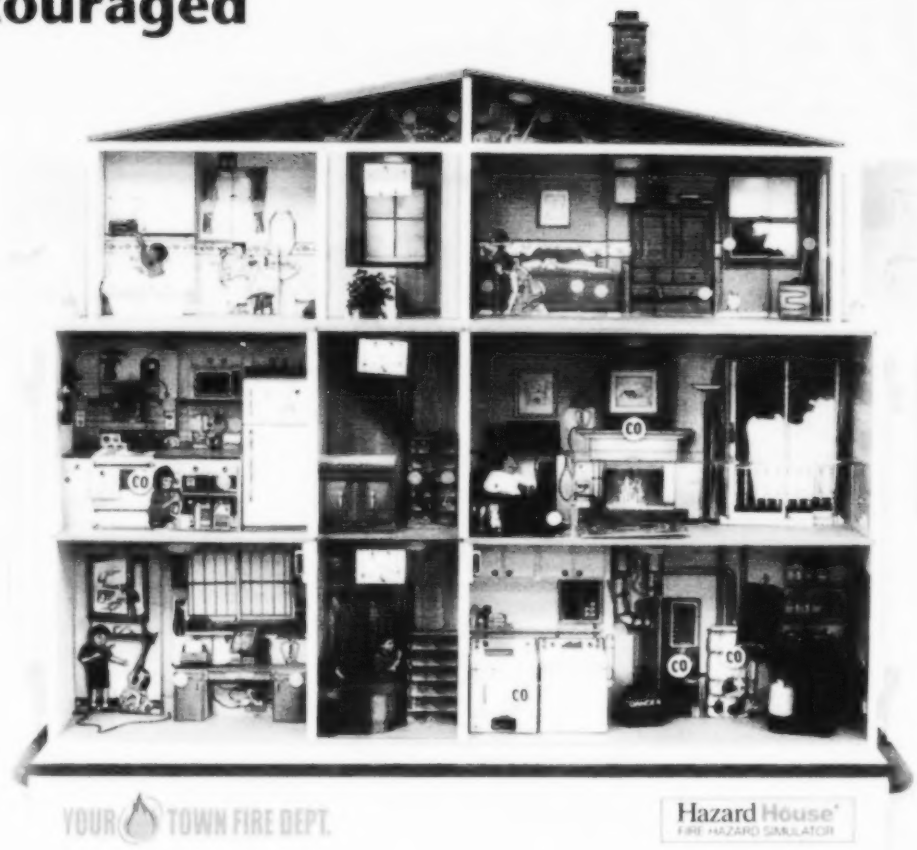
This tri-dimensional, animated and interactive resource is easy to transport in a car trunk. Hazard Houses are available from the FCO regional offices by filling out a borrowing agreement form and faxing it to the nearest office.

Displays and costumes

The FCO also has the following three displays available for borrowing:

- Home Fire Safety: It's as Easy as 1-2-3
- Learn Not to Burn (includes banners)
- *Risk Watch*

As well, the Sparky mascot costume is available for fire departments to use.



Pamphlets and children's activity booklets

A variety of fire safety pamphlets, booklets, and children's activity and colouring books are also available from the FCO.

Learn Not to Burn binders and resource books

A stock of *Learn Not To Burn* teaching resources are available free of charge from the FCO. These materials are geared for grades K to 3.

For more information about the above-mentioned resources or how to borrow them, visit www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_ed-tools.htm or contact the FCO by email at firecomm@gov.ab.ca or by phone at 780-427-8392.

The Hazard House is a unique teaching aid to provide innovative and captivating presentations on home fire hazards, early detection of smoke/fire and proper fire emergency responses.

Leduc County's successful program – Part II

THIS IS THE SECOND OF A TWO-PART SERIES ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION.

In the May 2007 issue of *Alberta FIREnews*, we focused on the Leduc County Fire Service's success in recruiting fire personnel. In this issue we focus on what this fire department is doing to retain its members.

Similar to the effort used in recruiting new firefighters to the Leduc County Fire Service, Joan Meidinger, Co-ordinator of Volunteer Services for Leduc County, has also put considerable time into developing ways to retain volunteer firefighters. In addition to learning as much as she could about the fire service and how to attract volunteers to it, Joan also devoted considerable effort into learning about what keeps them and also why they don't stay. Using this information, Joan has been able to develop a successful retention program for Leduc County.

First off, it is important to be proactive rather than reactive about recruitment and retention of firefighters. "You need to devise a plan to ensure that both recruitment and retention meet the needs of the firefighter and the fire department," advises Joan. "Plans change and you need to continually evaluate and re-evaluate the needs."

Joan is also quick to point out that society and lifestyles have changed over the years and that has affected volunteers. "Typically volunteers of old had a tendency to be well-rooted in the community that they worked and lived in. As a result, fire departments had volunteers who had tenure of 20 or more years. Now, the average length of service for a volunteer firefighter is four to five years," stated Joan. "Concentrated efforts must be continuous, including the development and implementation of new initiatives."

When Joan was hired as the Co-ordinator of Volunteer Services (first on a part-time basis, and then full time), her main goal was to plan and implement changes that enhanced the organized, structured, essential components of the county's volunteer program. "Knowing that the best volunteer recruiter is a satisfied volunteer, we have worked on building a positive image and keeping both our members and the public satisfied" added Joan. "We also realize that it takes much less effort and fewer resources to retain our members than constantly recruiting new ones, so we are constantly aware and looking at the organization, the volunteer benefit balance, and keeping on top of issues and trends as well as the strengths and weaknesses of our service."

Knowing that the primary reason that people volunteer is based on the individual's personal needs, Joan points out that as a department it is essential to recognize these needs and attempt to fulfill them. "Volunteer firefighters work hard and sacrifice much to provide a valuable service to their communities. It is important to keep volunteers satisfied, motivated and recognized," added Joan.

Some of the many incentives that the Leduc County Fire Service uses to retain and attract volunteer firefighters include:

- team influence and contribution through program evaluations
- detailed record keeping
- firefighter performance evaluation (including goal and objective setting and planning opportunities for growth)
- firefighter recognition as well as spousal and employer recognition
- open-door policy, which helps maintain open communication
- follow-up on identified issues, with both action and evaluation
- newsletters for firefighters and spouses
- fundraising for a training computer and interactive training software
- public relations and information going out to the community and businesses on a regular basis
- fair wage compensation package
- monitored mentor program
- department recognition events
- appreciation perks
- objective person to act as a liaison between firefighters and management.

For more information about the Leduc County Fire Service retention efforts, contact Joan Meidinger at 780-955-7099.

FCO establishes working group

Knowing the recruitment/retention issue is of critical concern to communities across Alberta, the Fire Commissioner's Office has established a working group to evaluate potential solutions that can help local fire departments improve their recruitment efforts, especially in terms of retaining firefighters already working with their fire department.

The Alberta FCO received permission from the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office to use the Ontario document as a starting point, which will enable the committee to create amendments to better fit Alberta's needs. Stay tuned for more information from this working committee in the near future. In the meantime, if you are interested in looking at the Ontario Fire Marshal's document, you can visit their website at www.ofm.gov.on.ca

Education and partnerships – central pillars of Alberta's *FireSmart* program

Alberta's forests are a complex mosaic of communities, wildlife habitat, natural resources, industrial developments and an endless array of land uses. With Alberta's population growing, more and more people are living in and around forested areas. While this landscape contributes to a high quality of life that Albertans value, it is continually at risk from the threat of wildfire.

Each year more than 1,000 wildfires are sparked in Alberta's forests, generally burning in excess of 120,000 hectares of land, equivalent to an area twice the size of Edmonton. While wildfires play an important role in maintaining healthy and vibrant forests, the unpredictable and explosive nature of fire poses a serious threat to the communities and other important values nestled within our forests.

Alberta's **FireSmart** program promotes a proactive approach to reducing the risk of wildfire through initiatives like community protection planning, prescribed fire and the integration of forest and land management objectives.

"Despite our best prevention efforts, the risk of wildfire will always be present in the lives of those who live in Alberta's forested areas," said Sherra Quintilio, Provincial **FireSmart** Program Co-ordinator with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. "The best line of defense for Albertans to help protect their homes, property and landbase from the threat of wildfire is to adopt and use **FireSmart** principles."

We have a number of success stories from across the province, but the challenge now is to bring FireSmart to the doorsteps of all Albertans living in a forested area.

Some Alberta communities have already jumped on board. A **FireSmart** Day was recently held in Larkspur, with educational material and hands-on demonstrations provided to residents. Some communities across the province have **FireSmart** committees where local representatives help develop and implement **FireSmart** strategies in and around their communities.

"We have a number of success stories from across the province, but the challenge now is to bring **FireSmart** to the doorsteps of all Albertans living in a forested area," said Adam Gossell, Provincial **FireSmart** Community Planning Specialist. "The success of the program also hinges on the development of partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries."

FireSmart is divided into the following three zones:

1. **Wildland Urban Interface zone** – generally defined as where homes/structures meet or are intermingled with forest or other vegetative fuel types within a municipality.
2. **Community zone** – extends for approximately 10 kilometres around Alberta's communities.
3. **Landscape zone** – covers the forested areas beyond the first two zones.

"Even though there are a number of jurisdictional boundaries within these three zones, the **FireSmart** concepts remain the same," said Quintilio. "The challenge is to develop meaningful partnerships where everyone has a voice at the table."

In the spirit of partnership, the Alberta Government has developed the **FireSmart** Community Grant Program. Funding from the program allows municipal agencies, including municipal fire departments, to implement the seven disciplines of **FireSmart** in the Wildland Urban Interface within their own communities.

For Alberta to become a **FireSmart** province, it will require the efforts of homeowners, businesses, industry and municipalities alike. For more information on how you can become involved, visit www.srd.alberta.ca/wildfires/firesmart

For more information on the **FireSmart** Community Grant Program and other **FireSmart** initiatives visit: www.srd.alberta.ca/wildfires/firesmart

Resources (in the Alberta Government Library Coalition Building)

National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Program: Making Your Home Fire Wise 30 min.

This video, designed for homeowners, demonstrates ways to improve the "survivability" of their properties to wildland fires when making structural changes or working with a contractor to design a new home. (FVC 213).

Seven disciplines of the wildland urban interface

1

Vegetation management: Manage the vegetation in and around your property to lessen the risk of wildfire. This can be accomplished by thinning and pruning, removing volatile trees such as spruce and planting fire-resistant species such as aspen (species conversion), the construction of fuel breaks or general cleanup in and around your property.

2

Education: Effectively communicate to people living in forested areas the need to be aware of the wildfire threat and to take action in having their property and community become "**FireSmart**".

3

Legislation: Review the existing legislation both provincially and within the local municipal government. Is it effective and being adhered to? Are changes and updates required to fit the need of preventing and actioning a wildfire scenario?

4

Development: Is the construction of new homes or subdivisions being developed in a "**FireSmart**" manner? Assess the infrastructure as it relates to roadway access, water supply, utilities placement, building materials and design and forested areas adjacent and within the community.

5

Planning: Put emergency procedures and response plans in place to meet the threat from a wildfire scenario. This preparedness occurs at all levels, from the homeowner to the fire agencies involved. Adapt existing developments to be "**FireSmart**." Determine the values at risk and build an appropriate preparedness plan.

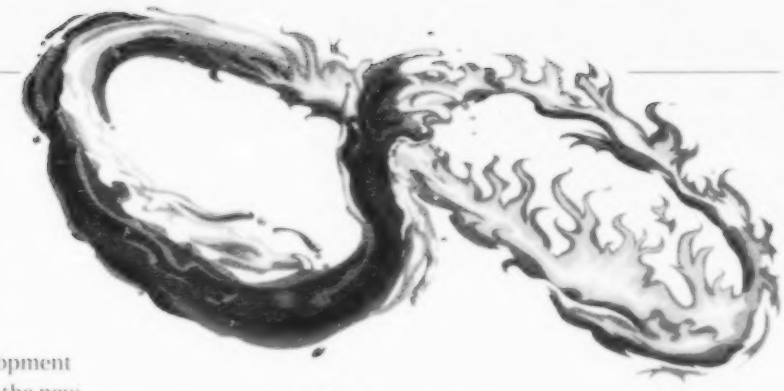
6

Training: Ensure cross-training is in place for the fire agencies involved in a suppression effort within the Wildland Urban Interface. Between municipal fire departments and the wildland fire agency (Alberta Sustainable Resource Development) ensure that the equipment, communications and training courses are compatible to effectively action a wildfire scenario in the Wildland Urban Interface.

7

Interagency co-operation: Bring together all of the agencies that can be involved with the scenario of combating a wildfire in the interface area. Co-operative agreements, partnerships, initiatives, emergency plans linked, and assigned commitments and responsibilities are in place and reviewed.

Reconstructed website enables better navigation



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE with the Lakeland College and **fire etc.** websites with the first phase of a web redevelopment project for Lakeland College that got underway July 1, 2007. As well as a new look with clearer navigation, there's also a new address: www.lakelandcollege.ca

"We've totally reconstructed our website to provide better resources for our clients," said Brunetta Mariani. "We've tried to make it more user-friendly as well as include some of the features that we know our clients wanted."

As part of the website redevelopment, the **fire etc.** site is getting a make-over and being amalgamated into the college's site. You won't need to reset your "favourites" just yet, as clicking on fire-etc.ca will still direct you to where you want to go.

Redevelopment work on the new site is ongoing. Significant changes are taking place at the **fire etc.** portion of the site, particularly in terms of overall navigation as well as some exciting new self management features in distance learning. The target date for these features is September.

One of the features is a bulletin board for course offerings so that fire departments can post the dates, location, price and contact information of their offerings of both **fire etc.** and other training courses. This will assist departments in communicating their regional training initiatives and marketing their programs to outlying communities. A second feature is instructor and evaluator directories. Individuals will be able to post their contact information along with a listing of courses they are qualified to instruct or evaluate and the communities to which they wish to offer these services.

There is also a proctor registry. Individuals wishing to proctor for **fire etc.** will be able to register themselves online.

This program is also for people such as firefighters, police officers and anyone who works in an industry or business that may require them to provide front-line emergency medical services.

New EMR program offered at fire etc.

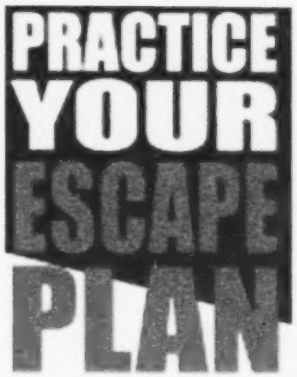
Speaking of courses, a new emergency medical responder (EMR) program is now being offered through **fire etc.**, Lakeland College's emergency training centre. The Alberta College of Paramedics has given **fire etc.** approval to run the program, which is considered entry-level training for pre-hospital care.

As Denis Cunninghame, manager of training services at **fire etc.** is quick to point out, the program is not just for people who are interested in being ambulance personnel. "This program is also for people such as firefighters, police officers and anyone who works in an industry or business that may require them to provide front-line emergency medical services."

This intense course is conducted over 11 days that includes a combination of 88 hours of classroom instruction, hands-on sessions and self study.

For more information about this program or others, call 780-853-8633 or visit www.fire-etc.ca

It's Fire Prevention Week – Practice Your Escape Plan!



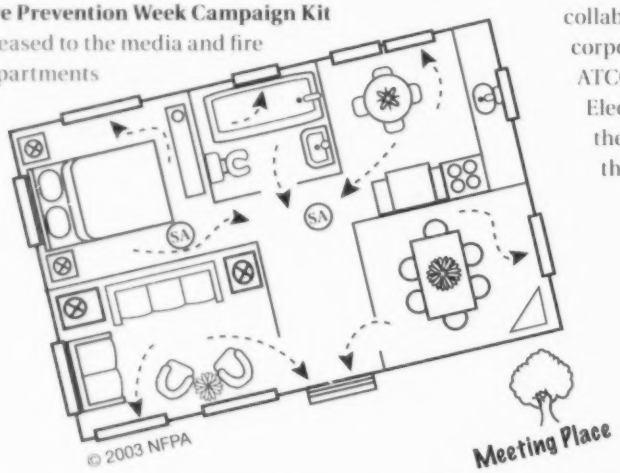
This year's theme for Fire Prevention Week, taking place October 7 through 13, focuses on how to plan and practice escape from a home if a fire occurs. The theme was selected by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which has been the sponsor for Fire Prevention Week for more than 80 years.

From 2001 to 2005, there were 8,000 home fires in Alberta, as reported to the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO). These resulted in 102 deaths, 920 injuries and $445 million in direct property damage.

Since most fatal home fires start at night, having properly working smoke alarms in the home is critical. In addition, proper preparation includes having a home fire escape plan in place and ensuring that everyone in the household has practiced it. The emphasis on fire escape planning during this year's Fire Prevention Week Campaign is supported by the findings from a 2006 survey commissioned by Duracell and the Canada Safety Council – **fewer than one in five Canadians surveyed have given thought to preparing their home fire escape plan or a home fire drill.**

The components of this year's Fire Prevention Week Campaign from the FCO include the following:

- **Fire Prevention Week Campaign Kit** released to the media and fire departments and posted on the FCO website (under "Fire Safety Campaigns."). This year's campaign kit focuses on the importance of being prepared to escape from a fire if one occurs as well as how to prevent fires from happening in the first place. The leading causes of home fires are cooking, smoking, heating, electrical equipment, and intentionally set fires.
- **A children's fire safety program** sponsored by ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric, which provides participating fire departments with free activity booklets for distribution through schools to children in Grades K to 3. Also included is the annual Fire Chief for a Day contest materials and a provincial grand prize of a home computer for a child.
- **An advertisement** placed in member newspapers of the Alberta Weekly Newspaper Association.
- A kick-off event in collaboration with the corporate sponsor, ATCO Gas and ATCO Electric, to engage the media and the public.



Resources

Donald's Fire Drill 15 min.

Donald challenges two children in a comical quiz show as they learn safety tips and techniques that will enable them to act safely if a fire occurs at home. (FVC 190)

Donald's Fire Survival Plan (Revised Edition) 11 min.

Donald and his nephews outline techniques for preventing or surviving a fire in the home. This program stresses the need for prevention, and presents the recommended "stop, drop and roll" life-saving technique, as well as EDITH (exit drills in the home). (FVC 016 or DFD 003)

Red The Fire Dog & the 3 P's of Fire Safety 15 min.

Show this entertaining and memorable program to young children to teach them everything they need to know about fire safety! Introduces the 3 P's of fire safety: PLANNING, PRACTICE, PREVENTION. Features Red the Fire Dog, who explains: making a family fire escape plan, preventing fire at home and protecting yourself. (FVC 251)

Family Fire Safety Video 28 min.

Intended for a general audience, this video emphasizes fire prevention and safety at home. Topics covered include the many different ways fires can start in homes, how to teach your family about fire prevention, how to make your home fire safe and responding to fire emergencies through well-rehearsed home fire escape plans. (FVC 209)

Great Escape Challenge (The) (NFPA) 15 min.

This video covers all the basics of safe escape, including how to prepare for an emergency and what to do during an emergency. Important messages are delivered using easy-to-understand language that reminds people to: install and test smoke detectors, make and practice an escape plan, react quickly and follow your plan, crawl low under smoke and use stairs, not elevators... and more. (DFD 051)

For information, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe, Assistant Fire Commissioner, at 780-415-0516.

60th anniversary conference a great success

The 60th annual Alberta Fire Chiefs Association conference was, by all accounts, a successful event. Registration included 227 delegates, 97 trade members and 94 trade assistants, plus 38 partners.

Premier Ed Stelmach receives an honourary fire helmet from AFCA Vice President Brian Cornforth (left) and AFCA President Brian McEvoy (right).

The opening ceremonies, which were orchestrated by the City of Edmonton Fire Services, set the tone for the next 2 ½ days of the conference. In addition to City of Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel bringing greetings, Dr. John Benoit was the keynote speaker for the Monday morning breakfast. Dr. Benoit spoke about Strategies for Rural Volunteer Fire Departments, an issue that figures prominently throughout Alberta. The well-attended Monday morning business sessions concluded with a round table chaired by AFCA President Brian McEvoy. The afternoon focused on visiting the trade show, which included a great variety of items of interest to fire service personnel. This year, the annual banquet was held on Monday, with Tim Vandenbrink serving as the guest speaker.

Tuesday also started off on a high note, with Ross Shier from Edmonton Fire Services presenting his views on 911 and his visit to the site of the World Trade Center in New York. This year's variety of breakout sessions included Photographing the Scene by Gerry Emas; NFPA Live Burn by Sean Tracy; Clandestine Labs by Darcy Strang; Fire Apparatus Specifications by Don Henry; Working with the Media by Nikki Booth; Leadership in the Fire Service by Jeff Carlisle; Level of Services by Ernie Polsom and Spence Sample; and Preparing for the Court Room by Gordon Sharek. The evening concluded with the Mayfield Dinner Theatre.

AFCA update-Emergency Management and the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office were one of many booths at the trade show component of the AFCA conference.

Wednesday morning saw the surprise visit from Premier Ed Stelmach, who spoke to the delegates on his view for a safe and caring community and responded to their questions. The AFCA presented the Premier with the traditional chief's white helmet.

Approved Resolutions

The resolutions sessions, which were chaired by Mac deBeaudrap, Fire Chief for Strathmore, focused on the debate and approval of the following nine resolutions:

1. Resolution passed to invite AUMA and AAMDC to appoint directors to the AFCA Board.
2. Resolution passed to support the Alberta Emergency Farm Plan.
3. Resolution passed to form a protocol agreement between AFCA, Alberta Municipal Affairs (including the FCO), EMS, AUMA and AAMDC.
4. Resolution passed to align boundaries of AFCA with the boundaries of EMA and FCO.
5. Resolution passed to support the proposed amendments to Part 9 of the National Building Code.
6. Resolution passed to support the proposed amendments to Part 3 of the National Building Code/Sprinklers.
7. Resolution passed to support the proposed amendments to section 3.3.4.8 requiring the installation of sprinklers in accordance with 3.2.5.13.
8. Resolution passed requesting the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs to stop telemarketing in Alberta.
9. Special resolution thanking the City of Edmonton Fire Services for their participation in the conference.

Mr. Alf Tauscher, former Barrhead Fire Chief, was granted honourary membership in the AFCA.

The Board has three new directors (all at large): Cammie Laird from Rocky Mountain House; Trevor Mistal from Sturgeon County and Allan Weiss from the City of Cold Lake.

Brian McEvoy was re-elected as president, Brian Cornforth as First Vice President and the second Vice President position will be filled by the Board. No other changes.

ACICR, First Stop for injury prevention resources

BY PATTI STARK, ACICR, Provincial Facilitator, Community Mobilization Strategy

PROVIDING INFORMATION ON INJURY PREVENTION RESOURCES, contacts, data and research is a primary function of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR). "As the field of injury prevention is growing and research on injury-related issues keeps increasing, it becomes challenging to keep up-to-date on current practices," explains Kathy Belton, Co-director of ACICR. "Our staff work to ensure that our information remains current and is useful for all injury prevention stakeholders."

The ACICR website makes a great deal of this information readily accessible to injury prevention practitioners across the province and beyond. A look through the site is highly recommended prior to planning and implementing any injury prevention program or project. Injury data, prevention information, project funding opportunities and current injury-related research projects can all be accessed at the new website address www.acicr.ualberta.ca.

Housed at ACICR is the Injury Control Library. Contained within the library are books, reports, programs, DVDs and grey literature on a vast array of injury-related topics. There are also a number of resources relating to other useful topics such as social marketing, community development and advocating for policy change. A library search function is available on the ACICR website. Once a stakeholder has identified resources of interest, an online request for the materials can be made.

To identify issues, and evaluate programs, practitioners need current data. ACICR has access to data on injury deaths, emergency department visits and hospital admissions. There are numerous other injury specific data sources including the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program and Alberta Transportation and Infrastructure's Traffic Collision Report which may be useful depending on the needs of the stakeholder. ACICR's Data Analyst is an excellent resource for finding the appropriate data for practitioners and for translating the data to a user-friendly format.

Networking provides injury prevention practitioners with opportunities for collaboration, facilitates the sharing of program knowledge, skills and experience and allows for updates on current activities, initiatives and services. ACICR facilitates two formal networks – the Regional Health Authority and Community Coalition Safety Promotion Network and the Alberta Seniors' Falls Prevention Network. A database of injury prevention stakeholders is also maintained by ACICR. Members of this database receive the monthly ACICR newsletter, Injury Control in Alberta, notices of special events such as conferences and workshops and other relevant resources and publications.

Current projects include a survey to determine usage of child safety restraints in vehicles and working with communities to develop blueprints for local impaired-driving interventions.

Current research continues to empower communities to take action to address their injury issues. As ACICR is part of the new School of Public Health at the University of Alberta, we have been able to expand the scope of injury research being conducted in Alberta. Current projects include a survey to determine usage of child safety restraints in vehicles and working with communities to develop blueprints for local impaired-driving interventions. Researchers are available at ACICR to provide community consultations on evaluation and research projects.

If you are considering taking on an injury prevention project, initiative or program, an excellent first step would be checking out ACICR for resources, data and research. Our staff are knowledgeable and always ready to offer assistance. Check us out online at www.acicr.ualberta.ca or by calling (780) 492-6019.

What the heck is FIPEN?

BY MAHENDRA WIJAYASINGHE, Assistant Fire Commissioner, Research & Programs, Fire Commissioner's Office

The fire service in Alberta and the rest of North America has been a pioneer in public fire prevention and fire safety education for more than a century. Widely recognized as community safe-keepers, the fire service has motivated people of all ages to exercise care and caution with fire through the use of a variety of innovative methods, resources, tools and presentations.

Fire service slogans such as "Stop-Drop & Roll" and "Never Smoke in Bed" have been etched in our memories from childhood. Fire service organizations not only developed comprehensive school-based fire and injury prevention programs such as *Learn Not To Burn* and *Risk Watch* but also promoted and supported these in the communities they serve. All this effort has created significant results. In fact, the declining frequency of fires and associated injuries and deaths in North America can be attributed, in part, to the educational efforts of men and women of the fire service.

Communities today have come to depend on the local fire service as the first responder to incidents that result in injury, death, property loss and environmental damage from fire as well as from a myriad of other man-made and natural hazards. Current response data indicate in general for the urban fire service that fire accounts for only 7% to 10% of all responses. It is notable that medical assist incidents, of which injuries occupy a significant proportion, account for nearly two-thirds of all non-fire incidents to which the fire service responds.

What role can the modern fire service play in preventing injuries in the communities they serve? Can the same successes in public fire prevention and fire safety education be achieved if the fire service takes on the challenge of injury prevention in their communities? A systematic attempt to find answers to these questions and more has been the task of a group of dedicated fire and injury prevention people during the last two years. The group is the Steering Committee of the Fire and Injury Prevention Educators' Network (FIPEN).

FIPEN is a collaboration of the Fire Commissioner's Office (FCO), Alberta fire/emergency services and the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR) who have been tasked with examining current risks to Albertans in terms of fire and unintentional injuries and recommending preventative strategies. The vision of FIPEN is Making Alberta the safest place to live. Its mission is to contribute to a reduction in the frequency and severity of fires and injuries in Alberta, make fire and injury

FIPEN Steering Committee members

Tim Vandenbrink, Edmonton Fire Rescue; Jan Deleeuw, *Risk Watch* Champion Management Team (RW-CMT); Dave McKenna, RW-CMT; Ken Fuhrman, RW-CMT; Darryl A. Shyian, Bonnyville Regional Fire Authority; Wes Van Bavel, Red Deer Emergency Services; Scott Hanelt, City of Medicine Hat Fire Service; Gord Colwell, Alberta Firefighters Association; Kathy Belton, ACICR; Patti Stark, ACICR; James Kostuk, City of Grande Prairie Fire Department; Stewart Fraser, City of Lethbridge Fire Department; Garth Rabel, Calgary Fire Department; Jim Smith, Okotoks Fire & Rescue Service and the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association; Ken McMullen, City of Airdrie Emergency Services and RW-CMT; Ken Fuhrman, RW-CMT; Mahendra Wijayasinghe, FCO; Spence Sample, FCO; Judy Harvie, FCO; and Ernie Polsom, FCO.

prevention education a priority for the Alberta fire/emergency services and recognize and reduce gaps in the delivery of fire and injury prevention education in Alberta.

In March 2007, the FIPEN Steering Committee reviewed a consultant's report it commissioned on fire and unintentional injury risks to Albertans. Based on the report findings, five priority areas were identified:

- seniors (high risk of fire death and falls)
- home/residential fires and injury issues
- arson and vandalism fires
- motor vehicle-related injuries, and
- injuries among teens and young adults.

The Steering Committee formed five working groups to tackle these priority issues and to recommend strategies and potential roles that the fire/emergency services in Alberta can play in public fire safety and injury prevention education.

FIPEN also serves as a resource to the Standing Committee on Public Education and Prevention (PEP) of the Fire Services Advisory Committee (FSAC). FSAC was established in June 2003 to represent the Alberta fire service and to begin developing a unifying framework that would allow the service to work more efficiently and effectively. In providing counsel to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on fire service issues, the committee speaks with a unified voice that represents the entire Alberta fire service.

FIPEN, together with PEP, has developed and forwarded a set of recommendations to FSAC on the future direction of public fire safety and injury prevention education in Alberta. These recommendations will form part of the final recommendations from FSAC to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in late 2007.

For more information on FIPEN or to contribute to the FIPEN activities, please contact Mahendra Wijayasinghe at (780) 415-0546 or Mahendra.wijayasinghe@gov.ab.ca

Resources (in the Alberta Government Library – Labour Building)

Risk Watch Teacher Video 14 min.

This video introduces teachers and school administrators to *Risk Watch*, a comprehensive injury prevention curriculum for school children. The program emphasizes that injuries are the number one cause of death in children under 14 years of age, and that injuries are preventable. *Risk Watch* covers the most common injury risks to children. (FVC 222)

Learn Not To Burn (Fire Prevention Canada) 20 min.

This video on *Learn Not To Burn* (LNTB) is a useful tool to promote the curriculum's widespread acceptance by children, elementary school teachers, school principals, parents and fire departments. All partners in the Canada-wide free distribution of LNTB materials are recognized. Success stories from exposure to LNTB and many more reasons why the curriculum should be taught are presented. (FVC 174)

Western Canadian Alliance update

Partnership expands to four provinces

AS MENTIONED IN PREVIOUS issues of *Alberta FIREnews*, Canada's two most western provinces created an alliance, called the Alberta/B.C. partnership, to create a forum for sharing and discussing fire issues. In the past two years, though, this partnership has grown to include all four western provinces, and has revised its name to the Western Canadian Alliance. Provided below is an update about this important partnership.

Although the name changed from the Alberta-British Columbia Partnership to the Western Canadian Alliance, the goal is still the same – sharing matters of common interest to emergency responders across the western region of Canada. "Almost two years ago, we started a partnership between the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office and the British Columbia Fire Commissioner's Office to explore and implement opportunities to share information and programs between the offices and the fire services of the two provinces. However, much has changed since our initial meetings, including the expansion of the partnership to include all four western provinces," said Ernie Polsom, Alberta's Assistant Fire Commissioner – Operations.

Beyond a name change, the alliance has also expanded its membership to numerous agencies within the four provinces. "The alliance includes more than fire services. It also includes emergency management leaders from each jurisdiction, the codes and standards agencies as well as other key organizations such as Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and the B.C. Forest Service," added Polsom.

The meetings, which are held twice a year on a rotational basis across the four provinces, provide the opportunity for everyone to get updated on current and important issues and initiatives in each jurisdiction. This enables all participants to both share and learn from the collective processes, procedures and lessons learned by the experience of the alliance's colleagues. The most recent meeting was held in Victoria, B.C. in February and the next meeting is scheduled for Brandon, Manitoba in October 2007.

Emergency service response & mutual aid agreements

BY J. DAVID CLARKE, Manager of Insurance & Risk Services, Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties

Shared services, budgeting issues and an increasingly litigious society have created an environment in today's world that requires special handling when it comes to emergency services. This cross over between urban and rural jurisdictions towards providing essential services, none of which can have such importance as protection of person and property, has never been so tantamount as it is in Alberta now.

Although the formalization of agreements between jurisdictions for emergency services is not a new concept, the need for understanding related to where responsibilities lie for all parties has never been more relevant than it is here and now.

Many jurisdictions share response duties and the storage of vehicles and equipment, as well as the maintenance and operation of the same by varying departments and individuals. It is understood that this is based on economies of scale, prudent management of the public purse and doing the best that can be done with organizations that live and die by budgets. The intent is fully reasonable, and dare it be said noble, but with this comes an exposure from an insurance and liability perspective that could leave gaping holes in the much needed Kevlar vests of our province's emergency service responders.

As the first in a series of articles that will deal with the exposures inherent with such ventures, this article will address the assets related to emergency service response, namely vehicles, and their operation.

There are numerous examples of emergency service vehicles being stored, maintained and operated from another jurisdiction's station or storage site, thereby providing access to all parties for use as required. For the actual legal owner of the unit, although there may be a clause related to who is responsible in the event of physical damage to or loss of the unit, what happens in the event that the unit is called out for use by the jurisdiction that does not have legal ownership of the unit itself, and the unit is involved in an accident with a third party while on route?

Some mutual aid agreements address this issue by stating that those who are using the unit but do not own or insure it are the responsible party for not only physical damage to the unit itself but also for the liability that arises out of its operation. The third party liability insurance coverage of the legal owner is the primary source of coverage for third party payouts on an auto liability loss. This does not, however, negate the exposure to the party who may have been simply operating the unit while on route to an emergency scene. Should the primary insurance limits of the legal owner become exhausted, the next stop would be what is known as the Non-owned Automobile Liability coverage of the organization operating the unit. This coverage is resident within most Commercial General Liability policies carried by most jurisdictions in Alberta.

There are further exposures that exist due to the storage and maintenance of units legally owned and insured by another organization within another party's fire hall or building. If the party who may not legally own the unit provides mechanical maintenance to the unit, or drives the unit from one point to another for such maintenance, there is an exposure to the organization who is performing such duties on the vehicle. Even though the jurisdictions involved may have agreed to hold each other harmless in the event there is damage to the unit itself, such an agreement does not prevent the insurance company providing the insurance to the legal owner from subrogating against the jurisdiction who simply stored and maintained the unit. Subrogation is a term whereby the insurance company pursues the party deemed to have been responsible for the loss, in order to recoup the costs associated with the paying out of a claim. Any jurisdiction that provides mechanical maintenance to vehicles it may not legally own and insure should carry what is known as a Garage Automobile policy. This policy provides protection to the party who stores and maintains another party's vehicles. When taking into consideration the value of emergency vehicles, the intent of jurisdictions when they enter into mutual aid arrangements, and the budget-driven nature of such services, a Garage Automobile policy would serve to protect those who may store and maintain others' vehicles from having to possibly pay out of their own pockets for a loss to another's vehicle should an insurance company pursue the party deemed to be legally responsible for such a loss.

With this in mind, it is in the best interest of all emergency service providers to include detailed insurance requirements including types of coverage, limits and cancellation or material change provisions, hold harmless/indemnity clauses, as well as Additional Insured status in all mutual aid agreements. Each party to the agreement should in good faith require that the other party provide evidence of the necessary insurance coverages at regular intervals as part of prudent and reasonable management of the overall process. Such provisions provide for the mitigation of "bad surprises" to emergency service responders from incidents arising out of the delivery of services jurisdictions have agreed to share for the common good of their citizens. Knowing just where the buck will stop, so to speak, in relation to insurance coverages, just when and where your own policy will respond, when and where the others will, or where they may not respond, is important information that will ensure continued co-operation between such essential service organizations.

FSAC update

Opportunities for improvements

The Fire Service Advisory Committee (FSAC) has been busy over the past few months work on a number of initiatives. Provided below is a brief overview of some of the more recent action related to this committee.

FSAC on Premier's radar

The Fire Services Advisory Committee received kudos during Premier Stelmach's visit to the 2007 Alberta Fire Chiefs Association's conference in June. As he stated, "the Fire Service Advisory Committee, which includes significant representation from municipal fire services – many of you here today – is one of many initiatives helping shape the future of the fire protection and emergency response services in our province."

The Premier also made reference to the FSAC report which is being provided to him later this year. More details about the report are provided below.

Preliminary draft report reviewed

At the FSAC general committee meeting conducted on June 22, members reviewed a preliminary draft of the report regarding the unified framework for the Alberta Fire Service that will be provided to the Minister this fall. The report will include findings from the work conducted by the FSAC and provide a number of recommendations. This includes findings and technical recommendations from the working groups as well as information from a local authority perspective from municipal representatives at the meetings. A revised draft which includes the outcomes of the June 22 meeting is being distributed electronically to the members for consideration and municipalities will have an opportunity for further input into the unified framework once the Minister has read the report.

Two of the working groups are still active and may provide additional information to be included in the final report.

Past members

FSAC would like to recognize and thank all former FSAC participants for their contributions to the committee: Wayne Morris, Vaughn Paul, Greg Holubowich, Bill Walker, Ken Brands, Laird Burton, Stew Walkinshaw and John McLevin. Special wishes also go out to Jan Papp, Fire Chief of Edmonton Airports who served as the federal government representative on the committee. Enjoy retirement Jan!

Leadership questionnaire prepared

As a follow up to the January 2007 focus group, the FSAC Skills, Competencies and Leadership Training working group developed a leadership model questionnaire that includes every level in the fire service. The questionnaire is scheduled to be posted on the FSAC website over the summer months. The input received will be beneficial in determining professional and leadership training opportunities, succession planning, individual learning efforts as well as reviewing organizational and performance management systems. The completed analysis of the survey will be posted on the FSAC website.

Home heating information

Preparing for winter weather

With winter weather not too far around the corner, it makes sense to start alerting community citizens about safety precautions related to heating sources, especially wood burning stoves.

According to a statistical analysis by the Fire Commissioner's Office of fires during the 10 year period from 1995-2004, home heating fires are the third leading cause of home fires and home fire deaths. They are also the fourth leading cause of home fire injuries, and are the third highest cause of property damage in home fires. In fact, every year in Alberta there are an average of 177 heating fires resulting in 21 injuries and two deaths.

Home heating fires, injuries and deaths occur mostly in fireplaces, central heating units, space heaters and water heaters fuelled with natural gas or solid fuels. Heating fires and injuries mostly happen when there is an underestimation of the risks these types of heating equipment pose or when combustibles are placed too close to the heating source. The best way to prevent heating fires, injuries and deaths is to educate the community about the hazards of various types of heating equipment, advising them to follow safe heating practices and stressing the importance of having the heat source installed, serviced and maintained by a qualified professional.

Home heating fires, injuries and deaths occur mostly in fireplaces, central heating units, space heaters and water heaters fuelled with natural gas or solid fuels.

For more information on heating fires see the Fire Facts Heating Fire Safety Fact Sheet on the Fire Commissioner's Office website at www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_FireFacts.htm

Preventative Planning for Winter Operations

ARTICLE COURTESY OF VFIS

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, firefighter operations during the winter months offer some significant challenges. A little forethought and preventative planning can help reduce or eliminate some of these challenges. Provided below are key points from an article by T. Randy Hess, VFIS Emergency Services Specialist, that can help your fire department avoid a hazardous situation that could damage your apparatus or cause injury to personnel or the public at large.

Tires

Tire condition is always important but for winter operations it is critical. The two main areas are proper inflation and tread depth. Over and under inflation can both cause problems with traction and steering control. Over inflation can reduce the amount of surface area that comes in contact with the road. Under inflation is a particular winter hazard and can cause over-flexing of the sidewalls, which can lead to blowouts through physical contact with the road surface.

Inadequate tread depth may greatly reduce moisture displacement and cause insufficient traction on snow or slush-covered roadways. Loss of traction will also affect speed and direction control as well as braking efficiency.

Air brakes

In cold weather, air brake systems need special attention. Compressed air usually has some water in it, and in cold weather it can freeze or cause brake failure. To avoid this, routinely drain the water completely, which tends to collect at the bottom of the air tank, to prevent ice from forming in the brake lines.

While some brake systems are equipped with automatic drain systems, they may also be equipped for manual draining. Even automatic systems with electric heating devices should be tested and maintained to ensure proper operation.

Snow changes

Examine the chain's cross links and replace any that are worn, then check for any attachment hooks that are spread and re-secure them. And, before snow is present, place chains on the apparatus to test the fit. Tire wear since the last fitting may cause the chains to be too loose.

Wiper blades and washer fluid

Inspect wiper blades to ensure they are in good condition and make full contact with the windshield. Any indication inadequacy means the blades should be replaced. When replacing blades, give consideration to the winter conditions in your area and choose a blade that matches your apparatus and climatic requirements.

Also, check that the windshield washer fluid reservoir is full and contains washer antifreeze to prevent icing. When replacing the washer antifreeze, always pump some of the new antifreeze through the system to displace any water of weak antifreeze.

Pumps

To prevent water freezing in fire pumps, follow these steps:

- Ensure that the hating system in the building housing the apparatus is working properly.
- To protect again freeze up during response, simply circulate water between the pump and tank while the apparatus is parked or not actively pumping water.
- In extreme cold or the apparatus is housed where it cannot be adequately heated, draing ht pump and leave the drain valve open while in the station to prevent damage to the pump. Make sure the pump operator is aware so there is no delay in priming the pump for fire suppression.

To help prevent slips and falls, carry a mixture of dry sand and rock salt or calcium chloride on service vehicles.

Leaks

Even the best apparatus leaks water occasionally. In cold weather, even minimal drip rates can lead to significant mishaps (e.g. water dripping on the roadway while investigating a false alarm could freeze and be slippery enough to cause an unsuspecting motorist to lose control or cause a pedestrian to slip and fall). Routinely look for leaks and have them promptly repaired.

Slip prevention

To help prevent slips and falls, carry a mixture of dry sand and rock salt or calcium chloride on service vehicles. The mixture can be used to eliminate slippery road conditions after you mop up, prevent a traffic hazard due to water leaking on the roadway or prevent a pedestrian from slipping and falling on the sidewalk.

By acting on the above topics, you can help ensure that the only thing that freezes this winter is the skating rink and the only thing that falls is the temperature.

Digest

In memoriam

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of the following fire personnel.

* * * * *

Jim Fredrick Pankonin died on April 27, 2007 at the age of 35 years. A firefighter with the Pickardville Volunteer Fire Department, Jim died of cancer. His hobby was planting trees and in his honour a tree seedling was provided to everyone who attended his funeral.

* * * * *

Roy Hawkins, former Fort McMurray Fire Chief from February 1974-June 30, 1982, died on April 23, 2007 of cancer. In addition to his fire service career, Chief Hawkins was a decorated World War II veteran and an outstanding community leader in Fort McMurray.

* * * * *

Jimmy McMullen, former Penhold Fire Chief and current ERT employee of Nova Chemicals, passed away suddenly in the early morning of July 2, 2007. In his honour, an Irish wake was held on July 5, followed by his funeral on July 6, 2007.

* * * * *

Firefighter Code of Practice now available

The new Firefighter Code of Practice has been updated to reflect the revised Occupational Health and Safety Code and has been repackaged into a Workplace Health and Safety Bulletin. While there have not been many major changes, some of the requirements have been clarified. There are also some new definitions included. For a copy of the document visit the FCO or OHS website at: www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_index.htm or

http://employment.alberta.ca/cps.rde/xchg/hre/hs.xsl/563.html

2005 Alberta Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report

The year 2005 fire loss statistics for Alberta are compiled in the 2005 Fire Commissioner's Statistical Report, published in July 2007. Copies have been mailed to all fire departments, insurance/adjuster companies and other stakeholders. The publication is posted on the FCO website at: www.municipalaffairs.gov.ab.ca/fco_FireCommStats.htm

To obtain a copy, please contact the FCO at (780) 427-8392 or email: firecomm@gov.ab.ca

Mark Your Calendar

The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs will be holding their Annual Conference September 23-26 in Niagara Falls, Ontario. For further information on registration and accommodation, check out their web site at www.cafc.ca

Phone number changes underway

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) recently announced that effective September 12, 2008, 10-digit local dialing will be required for all local calls in Alberta.

To prevent the exhaustion of telephone numbers in the area code 403 and 780 regions, 10-digit dialing will begin on June 23, 2008 and will be introduced gradually over the following weeks. The change to 10-digit dialing will become mandatory by September 12, 2008.

Also effective on September 12, 2008, a new 587 area code will be introduced to provide area code 403 and 780 regions with new numbers. This means that customers seeking new numbers in the current 403 and 780 area code regions could be given a number starting with area code 587.

These measures are being implemented in response to the Canadian Numbering Administrator's forecast that the area code 403 and 780 regions will run out of telephone numbers by March 2009 and October 2009 respectively.

Fire Commissioner's Office staff changes

Judy Harvie, Fire Safety Officer, resigned from the Fire Commissioner's Office in July to pursue other opportunities. Judy's contributions to the First Nations and Métis fire services is much appreciated and we wish her the best of luck! Services to the communities Judy served will continue through the Fire Safety Officers of the FCO.

Letter to the Editor

The recent CRTC decision with respect to emergency management access to the 911 database is a great step forward for public safety. This decision will enable those charged with public safety and emergency management to access the 911 data to launch notifications to the public. This decision will take at least a year of work between the public and private sector in consultation with citizens to enhance existing voice response systems and geographic information systems.

Interestingly, current technology will allow the public safety and emergency management officials to use the 911 information to facilitate a warning without actually having access to the personal information. This is a win-win situation for all.

On the other hand, we need to be aware of the growing trend in cellular and voice over internet protocol (VOIP) usage. People are moving away from landline telephones in their homes. This trend is not great for 911 centres as it means added time to determine the location of the call.

Over the past 17 years, Alberta's Emergency Public Warning System has evolved and now provides coverage over 95% of the land mass of Alberta for over-the-air television and radio broadcast. This warning system allows trained users from Environment Canada, Alberta Environment, municipalities and the police to interrupt radio and television to broadcast critical information when there is an imminent threat to human life.

Colin Blair
Director, Operations/Training
Emergency Management Alberta

Memorial service for nine firefighters

Paying respect

ON BEHALF OF THE FIRE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE, Assistant Fire Commissioner Ernie Polsom attended the firefighter memorial service for nine firefighters who died in a furniture store fire in Charleston, South Carolina. The memorial service was held on June 22, 2007 for the firefighters who were killed in a roof collapse at a working fire in a sofa warehouse store on June 18, 2007. Two civilians were rescued and firefighters were fighting the fire when the roof collapsed on them.

Approximately 10,000 uniformed persons attended, with about 300 being Canadian, including a representative each from the Edmonton and Calgary fire departments. As Polsom explained, it was a highly emotional experience and the sheer magnitude of the disaster was unbelievable – nine separate losses, nine families affected, nine caskets and nine hearses. "We were received with open arms by the fire department and the community. People just couldn't believe that there were so many people across the continent that shared in their loss. They expressed their appreciation with words and hugs," said Polsom.

The tragic death of nine firefighters in a Charleston, South Carolina fire was felt by firefighters across North America. As illustrated by the photos above, many mourned the loss of those who risked their lives.

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